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*When a major organization created to stimulate dialogue and introduce “ideas worth spreading” exercises partial censorship of two of its talks, heads turn. Such was the case a few months ago when TEDx, a local version of TED, took down two U.K. talks: one by biologist Rupert Sheldrake, and the other by sociologist Graham Hancock, who spoke at a TEDx conference explicitly dedicated to presenting ideas that challenge mainstream thinking. Until then, TED’s reputation of presenting innovative messages was a refreshing break from the restricted, contrived media we are used to on TV and radio. Since then, a heated controversy about censorship, true science and freedom from dogmatic ideologies flooded the Internet. We offer the following report by Will Gethin, founder of Conscious Frontiers, and an article by Rupert Sheldrake to help you make an informed opinion.*

# Freedom for a Shift in Consciousness

# Has the Science Revolution of Our Times Just Begun?

By Will Gethin

In April, two open letters from Deepak Chopra and several highly acclaimed scientists, including Stuart Hameroff and Menas C. Kafatos, reprimanding TED's removal of the talks by Graham Hancock (*The War on Consciousness*) and Rupert Sheldrake (*The Science Delusion*) from the TEDx YouTube channel, with unsubstantiated claims of "pseudo-science"—suggest we could be on the brink of the major science revolution of our times—a revolution in our understanding of consciousness.

In their original letter, "Dear TED, Is It 'Bad Science' or a 'Game of Thrones'?", published in *The Huffington Post*, Deepak Chopra, M.D., FACP, Stuart Hameroff, M.D., Menas C. Kafatos, Ph.D., Rudolph E. Tanzi, Ph.D., and Neil Theise, M.D., suggest that the talks of Hancock and Sheldrake were removed because they endorsed "non-local consciousness"—the idea that consciousness exists beyond the human brain. Citing examples of scientific breakthroughs from Copernicus, Galileo and Einstein, whose theories overthrew the prevailing body of accepted knowledge, their open letter stated, "The greatest breakthroughs rarely come by acts of conformity."

In a response article, "TED, Censorship, Consciousness, Militant Atheists, and Pseudo Science!," Chris Anderson, curator of TED, pointed out that for every paradigm-shifting Galileo there are thousands of bad scientific ideas—hence TED's policy to "steer clear of talks that bear hallmarks of unsubstantiated science."

Chopra's response, "Reply to Chris Anderson, TED and the TED Community: We're Halfway There, But," complete with comments from 18 leading scientists, was devastating, highlighting that science only evolves with paradigm changes, not by defending existing dogmatic belief systems. It also stressed that the "pseudo-scientist" label could be applied to anyone doing vital research in consciousness and its relationship with fields like physics, psychology and neuroscience.

Menas C. Kafatos, Fletcher Jones professor of computational physics, Chapman University, commented:

"Fields like global climate, neuroscience and consciousness and even quantum field theory, advance through intersection of ideas and methodologies, not by censorship...We are now facing a grand revolution in scientific thought, through the dialogue between quantum theory, consciousness work, biology, and philosophy and psychology. TED has a great opportunity to help advance this transformation."

Kathleen D. Noble, Ph.D., professor of consciousness, School of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math, University of Washington, commented:

"The kind of backlash exemplified by TED has occurred again and again since Giordano Bruno was burned at the stake in 1600 for proposing what astro-physicists now call 'the multiple worlds theory,' and it is always at its most vociferous and vicious as a new way of thinking is emerging. But, as Thomas Kuhn reminds us, the old guard eventually and inevitably gives way to the new."

Currently teaching an upper-division undergraduate course titled "Consciousness, Ethics, and the Natural World," Noble asked her students what they thought about TED's censoring of Rupert Sheldrake (whose work they had studied), and concluded from their responses: "These are students at a mainstream research university for whom Sheldrake's ideas are common sense rather than 'pseudoscience.' Clearly, this latest scientific revolution is upon us."

Neil Theise, professor of pathology and medicine at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Beth Israel Medical Center, added: "Sheldrake and Hancock may be wrong in their ideas, but we do not yet know. Even if they are, the creativity of their work and their insistence on looking at aberrations and exceptions is certainly of value, at least to point the way to the kinds of creative explorations TED hopes to foster."

And consciousness researcher Christopher Holvenstot wrote: "Experiential approaches, including Graham Hancock's exploration of alternative states, represent an important aspect of our subject matter, and therefore our research. We are saddened to see his brave and very personal contribution disparaged as 'pseudo-science.'"

Hancock and Sheldrake both refuted all allegations of "pseudo-science," and issued challenges for a free and fair public debate (unanswered by TED). Their TEDx presentations swiftly became the most popular TED talks ever, with mass popular support calling for the talks to be reinstated to the TEDx YouTube channel.

Commenting on the latest rebuttals of TED in *The Huffington Post* by Deepak Chopra and the community of scientists, Graham Hancock said:

"This controversy has brought to light a fundamental fault line that is emerging in the science of consciousness between the old paradigm of materialist reductionism (represented by people like Richard Dawkins and Daniel Dennett) and a new paradigm of non-local consciousness. The new paradigm, represented by all the scientists who wrote to *The Huffington Post*, is open to the revolutionary possibility at the centre of both my talk and Rupert's talk, namely that consciousness may not be generated by the brain but rather 'transceived' by the

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brain—i.e., that consciousness may be a fundamental ‘non-local’ property of all dimensions of the universe and that rather than being an epiphenomenon of brain activity, it may instead be that the brain acts as an interface that allows consciousness to manifest ‘locally’ on the material plane.

“If the new paradigm proves to be correct, and it is intriguing to see these powerful voices raising that possibility, then the issue is by no means limited to consciousness, but calls into question many of the fundamental assumptions on which Western science has been built for the past 400 years. It is a revolution in the making, spearheaded by quantum physics and consciousness studies, with implications for our understanding of reality that are likely to be at least as profound as the implications of the dismantling of the Ptolemaic model by the Copernican revolution from the 16th century onwards, ushering in a new age of science.”

Just prior to this TED fiasco, Simon Senzon, D.C., a well-respected independent scholar on the use of perspectives and the paradigm of healing, interviewed Sheldrake on his new book, *The Science Delusion*. The following is his appeal to TED to “shed light on this paradox and hopefully inspire TED towards greater openness.”

“In our dialogue, Sheldrake explains the intent of his book: to offer scientifically testable experiments designed to question the dogmas associated with materialism. He notes that science as a method is wonderful. The problem arises when science becomes equated with the worldview of materialism. Since the late 19th century, materialism has dominated science.

“The materialist worldview is a belief system based on ten core beliefs. Many people call this worldview ‘science.’ The method of science and the worldview of materialism are actually two different things. By turning these ten dogmas into questions that can be tested using scientific methods, Sheldrake offers a pragmatic approach.... Rather than ask people to do these experiments and verify whether these are actually beliefs that can be questions, TED has quashed them.

“Sheldrake’s latest Socratic approach asks us to separate the worldview of materialism from the method of science.

“At the end of our interview, Sheldrake shared with me his hope for the book to start conversations. Perhaps this TED debacle has already done more to get this conversation going. Let’s hope it doesn’t take semi-censorship to do so in the future.” 

*[Editor’s note: We couldn’t agree more. And we are grateful that what began as an attempt to bias information has hit a level of public awareness it may never have had otherwise.]*



Inspired by a life-changing sabbatical exploring the spiritual underbelly of India and jaded after a decade amid the soulless, material drive of the consumer PR rat race, Will Gethin decided to take a more humanitarian career path, and turned his hand to promoting holistic, charitable and intercultural organizations as a communications consultant. Also working as a travel journalist and holistic explorer, he traveled to Mongolia, Peru, Morocco, India and the Arctic, learning and writing about global spirituality, holistic health, extreme travel and cultural change. Now based in Bristol, Gethin continues his publicity endeavors, and has strong contacts across the natural health, MBS, ethical, travel and green specialist press. Visit his website, [consciousfrontiers.com](http://consciousfrontiers.com). View article resources and author information here: [pathwaystofamilywellness.org/references.html](http://pathwaystofamilywellness.org/references.html).